

Extenuating Circumstances Policy

Your options

These guidelines relate to the formal submission of an extenuating circumstances (EC) claim to the academic team. You can also inform your supervisor about any extenuating circumstances you experience during the course of your studies. In these cases, you may wish to discuss with your supervisor whether a period of intermission would be appropriate. You may also wish to get in touch with Student Support services. Please contact Tracy@voicestudycentre.com for further information.

Issues requiring immediate resolution

The extenuating circumstances form should not be used to report issues that require an immediate resolution. For example, difficulties in your relationship with your supervisor, delays in ethical approval and problems accessing facilities. This list is not exhaustive but should be used as a guide to the types of issues that should be raised with your department immediately, rather than being submitted as a formal extenuating circumstances claim which may not be considered until your next Supervisory Panel.

Your responsibility to inform of extenuating circumstances

It is your responsibility to inform the support team about any extenuating circumstances you experience. Although you may have previously discussed your difficulties with your supervisor or another member of staff in your department, this does not in itself constitute the formal submission of an extenuating circumstances claim.

Extenuating Circumstances form

You should complete and return an Extenuating Circumstances form to Tracy Theobald, Tracy@voicestudycentre.com by no later than two weeks before the deadline published by the department/school if different. It cannot be guaranteed that forms submitted after this date will be referred to the EC team. You should also ensure that you record at least a brief summary of your extenuating circumstances on your report form.

It is essential to inform the EC team of any extenuating circumstances before they meet. You cannot subsequently appeal against a progress decision on the grounds of extenuating circumstances if you could reasonably have been expected to inform the EC team in advance.

It is also your responsibility to explain fully the impact of extenuating circumstances on your work. If you do not sufficiently explain their impact then you cannot subsequently appeal and ask the academic team to consider additional information that you could reasonably have been expected to provide in advance.

Information to include:

You should include on the form details of how your progress has been affected by your extenuating circumstances. Make sure you explain the impact these circumstances had on your performance. It is not the role of the EC team to work this out or to seek further information on your behalf.

Try to make your submission clear and concise. Remember that the EC team are trying to determine whether the circumstances are likely to have significantly affected your academic performance and progress and what reasonable action they can take as a result.

Documentary evidence you need to provide:**Extenuating circumstances of a non-medical nature**

You should if possible submit appropriate third party evidence to support your claim. We realise that in some cases it may be difficult to do this, and then panels may accept claims which are not accompanied by documentary evidence. However, a lack of third party evidence may weaken your claim.

Extenuating circumstances of a medical nature

You should submit appropriate evidence to support your claim. This could take the form of a letter from your GP or consultant, or from your counsellor.

Circumstances not taken into account

It is not possible to list every circumstance that the EC team would not accept or take into account. However, some of the more obvious examples are listed below:

- General pressure of academic work is not taken to be circumstances beyond your control, as you are expected to plan your work schedule
- A short-term problem or illness which has occurred during the year and which is not deemed to have had an overall effect on your progress
- Financial difficulties, as you are expected to plan and manage your budget sensibly
- Employment demands, as you are expected not to over-commit yourself to any paid or unpaid work that you decide to take on during your studies

In some cases, such as short-term illness, the academic office may accept your claim but they may conclude that it has no material effect on the decision regarding your progress.

Assessment of your extenuating circumstances

The academic team will try to determine whether, and to what extent, your reported extenuating circumstances have affected your academic performance and progress, and determine what action, if any, can be taken. In assessing the significance of extenuating circumstances the academic team will normally take into account:

- The severity of the problem and the length of time involved
- Any supporting documentary evidence
- Whether it is possible to gauge the effect of the extenuating circumstances upon academic performance
- Whether your achievement is consistent with past performance
- Whether it is possible to adjust the deadline for you to reach expected milestones

Possible action taken by the academic team

The academic team can assess whether your extenuating circumstances have affected your ability to submit work by the required deadline. It also assesses whether your extenuating circumstances have affected your progress in a way that means it is not reasonable to have expected you to reach the required milestone. In such cases, the EC panel may be able to extend the deadline for work to be submitted.

If appropriate, the academic team may recommend that you take a period of intermission (leave of absence). The academic team cannot allow an indefinite extension to your deadline.